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S.H. 1830

LETTER

TO THE

REV. HENRY HART MILMAN, M.A.

REPUTED AUTHOR OF A

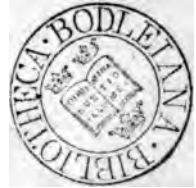
HISTORY OF THE JEWS,

IN THE FIFTH, SIXTH, AND NINTH VOLUMES OF THE

FAMILY LIBRARY:

Deprecating the Republication of that Work.

BY "ONE WHO IS ALSO AN ELDER."



OXFORD,

PRINTED BY W. BAXTER,

FOR J. PARKER; AND C. J. G. AND F. RIVINGTON, ST. PAUL'S
CHURCH-YARD, AND WATERLOO PLACE, LONDON.

1830.

905.

REV. SIR,

IN identifying the Author of a recent "History of the Jews" with a respectable Clergyman of the national Church, and in regarding you under that twofold character, I presume that I am fully justified, not only by the unanimous consent of the publick, but by the terms in which the work was announced before its publication ; although your name has not appeared in the title page, nor, so far as I have observed, has "the History" been publickly avowed by you, or authoritatively attributed to you since. The identity however, I suppose, may be properly assumed : and I accordingly venture to address myself to you, Rev. Sir, in your clerical as well as in your literary character : partly for the purpose of assuring you, that nothing shall be said in the following Letter inconsistent with the reverence which I esteem due to that character ; and partly because in that character you will probably be most sensible of the weight of the remarks, (whatever their weight may be,) which I propose to take the freedom

of addressing to you. For the freedom which I meditate I offer no apology : the subject, on which I propose to address you, is one of publick concern, and one in which every member of the community is free to profess his sentiments.

Two or three weeks ago, Rev. Sir, it chanced that on the same day two different reports were communicated to me concerning your “ History of the Jews :” one, that in consequence of the censure which the work had undergone you intended to withdraw it from future circulation ; the other, that, indifferent to that censure, you intended that the work should still continue to be circulated. I have watched with some anxiety the issue of these reports ; and am at length compelled however reluctantly to believe, that the latter had its foundation in truth, several advertisements in the publick papers during the interval, and especially one appended in the course of the last week to a new publication by Mr. MURRAY, having announced that *a new edition* of the “ History of the Jews” is at our command for the formation of our “ Family Libraries.” In the new publication to which I allude, namely, the first volume of Massinger’s Plays, I

observe that care has been taken to "adapt it for family reading and the use of young persons by the omission of objectionable passages:" as no such intimation accompanies the announcement of *the new edition* of the "History of the Jews," I conclude that that History again comes before the publick "with all its imperfections," both positive and negative, "on its head."

Permit me, Rev. Sir, to submit briefly and respectfully to your consideration *two or three reasons*, why it had appeared to me not improbable, that the former of the two reports, which I have just mentioned, was not unfounded, and that the "History of the Jews" would be withdrawn, at least until it had undergone such alterations as would rescue it from the censure which it had incurred in its original state: and permit me further to express *a hope*, that it is still possible for such a result to take effect.

It is not my part to apprise you, Rev. Sir, that *a pernicious tendency* has been attributed to your "History of the Jews." It is also quite unnecessary for me to recite the grounds of that allegation: nor does it fall within the scope of my present

remarks to signify distinctly at this period of my Letter, what may be my own sentiments upon it. Suffice it that your "History of the Jews" has been charged pretty strongly and broadly with a pernicious tendency. I admit at once that no such tendency was in your original purpose: I admit that such a tendency may not, even now, be perceived by you: and for argument's sake I will suppose, that such a tendency *may have been* insufficiently attributed to your work. On the other hand it is but reasonable and fair to suppose, that there *may be sufficient grounds for the charge*: that the *tendency of the work*, though not originally designed, nor actually perceived by you, *may be pernicious*: and a strong probability on this side of the question does, I confess, appear to me to arise from a consideration of the authorities by which the charge has been alleged, and of the total absence of all suspicion of any motive for alleging it other than a sense of the charge being true. Supposing then, Rev. Sir, that the work in question *may have* a pernicious tendency, is it desirable that such a work should be offered to the publick, especially for such a purpose as this is professedly offered, namely, for

the instruction and entertainment of the *families*, the young, that is, the inexperienced, and the less informed part, of the community? Should not the *probability* of doing injury be avoided? Should not “the *appearance* of evil” be abstained from? It may be answered perhaps, that the probability of injury, the appearance of evil, may be counter-balanced by a compensation of good. I ask again, Are we to “do evil,” are we to admit the probability, the appearance, of evil, “that good may come?” But what is the good, which the work professes for its object, and which we may hope to arrive at by its means? Whatever that good may be, I apprehend that I am warranted in affirming that it is not of a religious kind: that your aim, Rev. Sir, and your wish, has been and is, to exclude the work from the catalogue of books for religious instruction and improvement: that it stands altogether on the footing of an ordinary history, having no other pretensions to notice than a history of Egypt, Greece, or Rome: that in a word its object is, not to improve the heart, but to inform the understanding. With all sincerity I beg you to believe, that this observation is not thrown out

invidiously, but that it is meant to express my real apprehension of your purpose in writing and putting forth your "History of the Jews," as collected from your own declarations. I do not suppose then that the production of religious improvement was your object; and I certainly do not see what religious good is to be derived from it. And I do accordingly propose the question solemnly for your consideration and decision, whether the good, whatever it be, which you do propose, is worthy of being put in competition with the *religious evil*, which I am contemplating as the supposed and probable result?

But, if the tendency of the work is to be contemplated as probably pernicious to those in future for whose use it is designed, the actual result of it has already been to *give offence to others*: persons, of a very different description from those, for whose use the "History of the Jews" was intended; but who naturally feel a lively interest in the character of such a publication, and whose profession, station, talents, and acquirements undoubtedly intitle their judgment to respect. I do not for a moment imagine, Rev. Sir, that you anticipated, much less that you designed, the giving of offence to any one

by your publication. That offence however has been taken is beyond question. It has been taken by those, who could have no private motive, no personal feeling, to induce them to entertain unfavourable sentiments towards the Author or his work. It has been taken, apparently and avowedly from the persuasion, that your History was constructed upon principles and in a manner calculated to do injury to that which they consider of infinitely higher moment than any private personal interests of their own: namely, the honour of the Almighty and the truth of the revelations of his will to mankind. Such offence has been declared by some. It is doubtless entertained by many, very many, more: indeed I may safely say, Rev. Sir, for your information, that out of the numerous persons, with whom it has fallen in my way to converse on the subject of the "History of the Jews," (several of them, as well as he who now takes the liberty of addressing you, Clergymen of the Established Church,) scarcely one could be mentioned, who has not given vent to his sentiments on the occasion in the language of pain and sorrow, or of indignation and disgust. Is it not reasonable, I would ask,

that these persons should be satisfied, so far at least as the circumstances will admit of their receiving satisfaction? Perhaps I shall be answered in the negative, for that they have taken offence without just cause. But is it clear that the cause for which offence has been taken is not just? is it clear that they are not right in their judgment, and that you, Rev. Sir, are not wrong? If they are right in their judgment, and if they have taken reasonable offence against you, you will, I think, agree with me in opinion, that amends should be made for the offence as far as is now in your power, by removing the occasion of it. Even if their judgment be incorrect, and their dissatisfaction groundless, and they worthy of being ranked only among "weak brethren;" still, as their leaning is to the side of piety, and God's honour, and the preservation of divine truth, and the protection of untainted minds from injury, I put it to your conscience, as a minister of the Gospel, whether it does not behove you to "take heed, lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that are weak." In this respect again any good, of which your "History of the Jews" may be productive, (such good, I repeat

it, being not of a religious kind,) will be dearly purchased at the cost of the positive evil which it occasions by the offence excited in the minds of your brethren.

Connected with this is another point not unworthy of your attention. The *offence* which has been excited by the publication of your "History of the Jews" will be constantly *perpetuated* and *kept in action* by the repetition of its publication. The censures which have been cast upon it, the cautions which have been given against it, will, as opportunities shall serve, or need shall seem to require, be repeated by those who shall continue to be impressed with a sense of its pernicious tendency. A painful state of things to those who are engaged in such discussions, on either side of the question ; painful, I well believe, Rev. Sir, to you as well as to your censors : a state of things meanwhile, full of solicitude and distress to those well-wishers to religion, who are witnesses of it ; but a state of joy, and exultation, and unholy triumph to the infidel and the sceptick, the scoffer and the blasphemer. The responsibility for evil belongs to him "by whom the offence cometh:" pardon me if I say, that for the evil now contem-

plated the responsibility belongs to you. Your first edition may have been, and I for one am inclined to hope and think that it really was, put out, without your being aware that this consequence would ensue. Your perseverance in the publication will carry with it the same consequence, which now must be foreseen, and cannot be avoided: a consequence, let me add, which is challenged without the prospect of any compensating good. Therefore, that I may express myself in language, with which you doubtless are familiar,

— The best, that I can you advise,
Is to avoid the occasion of the ill:
For when the cause, whence evil doth arise,
Removed is, the effect surceaseth still.

By withdrawing your History, you will allow the agitation which has been raised by it to subside and die away. And you will thus escape the responsibility and discredit of perpetuating the mischief of controversy, and will deserve the character of acting an honourable and upright part by withdrawing it.

But it may be asked, would you not be thereby acknowledging that the tendency of your "History

of the Jews'' is injurious ; and that the censures, which have been passed upon it, are just ? I answer, Rev. Sir, that, *if you are conscious* of such being the truth, it were better at once to acknowledge your conviction, and to make all possible reparation to the cause of God, and of his revealed truth, and to the feelings of pious and good men, by a frank avowal that you had committed an error, unintentionally and inadvertently, but that you have been brought to a better mind. And I will here unreservedly declare my opinion, that, after the remarks which have been laid before the publick on the subject of your work, you are not likely to retain that perfect confidence in your original views, which I give you credit for having entertained when you composed and published it. The sentiments which have been expressed by those who have undertaken to criticise it ; the exposition which has been made of its false principles, of its delusive views, of its imperfect or erroneous representations, of the disparagement thrown by it on the word of God, and of the effect which it is calculated to produce on the mind of the young, the ignorant, the incautious, the injudicious reader ; and the feelings which have been in con-

sequence aroused in a large, I will venture to say, Rev. Sir, in a very large portion of your countrymen, professors of that religion, and members of that Church, of which you are a minister; must, unless your nature be indeed strangely constituted, have awakened some corresponding feelings in your own mind: must have in some degree shaken your previous assurance of the value and harmlessness of your work; must have given birth to some misgivings at least, must have instilled into you some suspicions, that all is not right. If such be indeed the case, why not candidly avow it? But supposing that *you still perceive no cause* whatever to question the correctness of your former judgment, the course is open for you, on withdrawing your work, to make a statement of your sentiments accordingly. You may state, that, as you were originally not aware of your "History" being objectionable, so you continue to be unconscious of its liability to the objections which have been alleged against it: that your judgment of its inoffensive character remains unaltered: but that you feel a deference for the opinions of able, learned, and pious objectors, and for the answering feelings of the community; that

you are anxious to avoid all needless offence ; that you deprecate the commission, the continued wilful commission, even of possible, of apprehended injury ; and therefore you withdraw your volumes from circulation. This would be conduct and language worthy of a Christian, and a Christian Clergyman : and I venture to predict, that you would experience an ample remuneration for it in the testimony of a self-approving conscience, and in the estimation of those who can duly appreciate what is “ virtuous and praiseworthy,” what is “ lovely and of good report.”

I admit, if it be required, that in order to make up your mind to such a measure, some *self-denial* in another respect may be requisite. You may perhaps feel reluctant at relinquishing the distinction of being celebrated in the mouths of men as “ the Historian of the Jews.” It is pleasing to me that I can observe upon this, Rev. Sir, that your character holds its rank in publick estimation on grounds much higher and firmer than that of your recent History, and that it can endure this diminution of credit. Further I observe, that whatever honour you may imagine yourself to have gained from that

work, you may be assured that you have suffered from it a large proportion of dishonour. And when you consider who and of what character are those, in whose estimation you are, and, if you persevere, you will still be, dishonoured, you will have reason to be satisfied, that, in calculating the results of your "History," honour is no positive acquisition in the balance. I reckon indeed that the possession of literary fame to a Christian, especially to a Christian Clergyman, "is not worthy to be compared" with the discredit on the one hand of disparaging the revealed word of God, of weakening the religious faith of the young and inexperienced, and of causing offence to others; and on the other hand with the glory, even in this life, of counteracting or remedying such evils as these, and of substituting the opposite blessings. But however this be, and whatever credit you may gain or lose with men by withdrawing your work, I intreat you, Rev. Sir, to consider, whether self-denial, in such a case as this, be not *a duty*. I need hardly express my persuasion that it is. But indeed so strongly am I persuaded of its being so, that, if I may venture to affirm, what would be my own decision and my

own conduct under imagined circumstances, I declare to you on the faith of a minister of the Gospel, that I would not, on the supposition of the case being mine, be a party to the publication of *a new edition* of the "History of the Jews," "*for all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them.*"

It is under the influence of this sentiment that I have taken the liberty of submitting to your thoughts the foregoing hasty observations. For my freedom in addressing you on such an occasion, I have already stated that I conceive no apology to be requisite. I trust that the same remark will apply to the temper and manner of my Letter, which I wish to exhibit that "uncorruptness in doctrine, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned," accompanied withal by that "gentleness, forbearance, and meekness," which become one "servant of the Lord" in communicating with another concerning a subject which touches the well-being of their common faith. If I have erred from this rule, I beg you to pardon me. As to one particular of my address an apology perhaps may be necessary: namely, for that I have placed your name to a Letter, from which I have withheld

my own. For this omission my apology must be, that although I would prefer not to publish my name on the present occasion, I shall not be studious to conceal it; and that I shall esteem an avowal of it due to you, if you shall think proper to require it.

I pray God to give us a right judgment in all things by his Holy Spirit, and for the sake of his beloved Son: and I beg you to believe me,

Rev. Sir,

With due respect,

Your faithful servant,

"ONE WHO AM ALSO AN ELDER."

May 4, 1830.

POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE the foregoing Letter was sent to the press, a suggestion has been made to me, that it may be not in your power to withdraw from publication your "History of the Jews," for that in all probability the work belongs to the publisher. This fact however, if such it be, does not affect my argument: for as it would be your duty in my judgment to withdraw the work yourself, if it remained at your disposal, so permit me, Rev. Sir, to add, that it is your duty, if the work is at the disposal of your publisher, to exert all your influence for prevailing on him to withdraw it, and so to endeavour that you may be the means by God's blessing of "delivering him from the evil," into which you have been the means of leading him.

My argument with you has turned in part on the consideration of the *honour*, which may be thought to accrue from the work to the author. With the

publisher perhaps it should be made to turn on a consideration of the *profit*: although I can hardly suppose that a gentleman of his respectability can feel indifferent to the manner in which his character must be affected in the estimation of those, whose good opinion he would value, by his perseverance in his present course. However, looking to it as an affair of *profit* I would say, that, as it is a question worthy of your consideration, whether you ought to risk the continued publication “for all the kingdoms of the world and the *glory* of them,” so it behoves him to consider, whether he ought to risk it “for all the kingdoms of the world” and their *riches*: “for what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” Both author and publisher will have to answer for their conduct in relation to this work before the judgment-seat of Christ. God forbid that I should judge another man! Yet I cannot avoid the impression, that it will be a fearful thing, to have to answer for perseverance in the circulation of such a work as the one in question, the nature and tendency of which have been distinctly pointed out, as calculated to dishonour Almighty God, to depreciate his

holy word, to undermine the foundations of revealed religion, to endanger the faith of multitudes both of this and of future ages, and thus to become

Accountable for thousand Christians' deaths.

This character of the work has been pointed out, I say, distinctly by other writers, and it has not been my province in the foregoing Letter to give proof of it. If however additional proof be required, it is supplied by the patronage, which I understand to have been recently extended to your publication, by its exposure in an infamous shop in the city of London, along with the most blasphemous publications of the age. It was the saying of a great master of wisdom, "Tell me a man's associates, and I will tell you the character of the man." This association with avowed infidels is, I am fully persuaded, Rev. Sir, not of your seeking, or of your publisher's. But it may serve to shew the nature of your "History of the Jews" in the opinion, not of the friends only of religion, but of its enemies: who exult doubtless in the acquisition of such a coadjutor, and rejoice to think that one, "who hewed timber afore out of the thick trees" of

Lebanon, "and was known to bring it to an excellent work," should now be taking part with them in "breaking down" the beautiful "carved work" of the sanctuary of God "with axes and hammers."

THE END.





